

OT I: Creation to United Kingdom

BIBLE BASICS

Old Testament High Level Overview

Creation & Pre-Flood

The Bible commences with the narrative of Creation, a profound account of the divine act that brought forth the universe, our planet, and the myriad forms of life that inhabit it. At the heart of this narrative is the creation of humanity, crafted in the image of God and entrusted with the stewardship of the world. However, the harmonious relationship between humanity and the Creator was soon disrupted by the Fall of Man. This pivotal event, often symbolized by the story of Adam and Eve's forbidden fruit, marked a turning point in the human journey.

Through the Fall, sin entered the world, initially manifesting as a seemingly innocuous act of disobedience. However, sin's insidious nature led to its exponential growth, corrupting humanity's hearts and minds and leading to acts of violence and depravity. By the time of Noah, sin had become so pervasive that no righteous person remained, leaving God with the agonizing decision of whether to preserve or destroy His creation.

Yet, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, God chose a path that would ultimately redeem and restore humanity. He called upon Noah, a righteous man, to build an ark that would serve as a sanctuary during a cataclysmic flood that would cleanse the earth of its wickedness. The flood symbolized God's judgment upon sin but also His desire to preserve His creation.

In Noah and his family, God saw a glimmer of hope. Through the waters of the flood, they underwent a transformative experience, a baptism of righteousness. This symbolic cleansing represented the potential for humanity to be renewed and restored to its original purpose. Noah's ark became a vessel of salvation, a reminder that even in the midst of judgment, God's grace and mercy endure.

The Patriarchs

After the great flood, time progressed, and the era of the Great Patriarchs commenced. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the forefathers from whom the nation of Israel (the church) originated, emerged during this period.

Sarah, Abraham's wife, harbored doubts about God's promise of a child. Consequently, she encouraged Abraham to conceive a child, Ishmael, with their maid, Hagar. However, God's promise

prevailed, and Sarah eventually gave birth to Isaac. Abraham, at Sarah's request, sent Hagar and Ishmael away. However, God lovingly cared for both of them.

In a profound test of faith and obedience, God instructed Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, his beloved son. Abraham's unwavering trust in God led him to comply. Miraculously, an Angel intervened, providing an alternative sacrifice in Isaac's place. God then revealed his purpose for Sodom to Abraham, who interceded on its behalf.

Seeking a suitable wife for Isaac, Abraham dispatched his servant to find her. The servant journeyed to Mesopotamia and found Rebecca, the daughter of Abraham's nephew Bethuel. Isaac and Rebecca were married, but it took twenty years for her to conceive. When she finally did, she gave birth to twins, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the elder of the two. A prophecy foretold their destinies: "Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples shall be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other. And the older shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23).

Jacob, driven by his desire for his father Isaac's blessing, resorted to deception. He tricked Isaac into believing he was Esau, his older twin brother, and received the blessing intended for Esau. Esau, upon discovering the betrayal, was filled with rage and vowed to kill Jacob. Fearful for his life, Jacob fled to Haran, where he sought refuge with his uncle Laban.

In Haran, Jacob found himself caught in another web of deception. Laban, taking advantage of Jacob's vulnerability, deceived him into working for him for seven years in exchange for the hand of his younger daughter, Rachel. However, on the wedding night, Laban substituted Leah, Rachel's older sister, for Rachel. Disappointed but determined, Jacob agreed to work another seven years to marry Rachel, whom he truly loved.

Jacob's time in Haran was not without its blessings. He became the father of twelve sons, 6 from Leah, 2 from Rachel and 4 from their maids. (Genesis 30) These sons would later become the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel. Among them was Joseph, the eldest son of Rachel, who would play a pivotal role in guiding the Israelites to Egypt.

Slavery in Egypt, and conquest of Canaan

The Jews are then enslaved in Egypt. The enslavement and freedom of the Jews is detailed in Exodus, Deuteronomy, Numbers and Leviticus. Israel, God's people, went into enslavement quickly yet again but protected through baptism and the gift of the laws. Despite their suffering, God's protection and guidance never wavered. Through baptism and the gift of the laws, they were empowered to break free from the chains of slavery, both physical and spiritual. [ends Pentateuch]

The newfound freedom brought about the opportunity to enter the promised land. God promised victory in military campaigns and vowed to remain with the Israelites as long as they adhered to His laws. Surrendering to the Holy Spirit's guidance, just as they once obeyed the laws, they were led by Joshua to the promised land, a representation of Heaven. [ends Joshua]

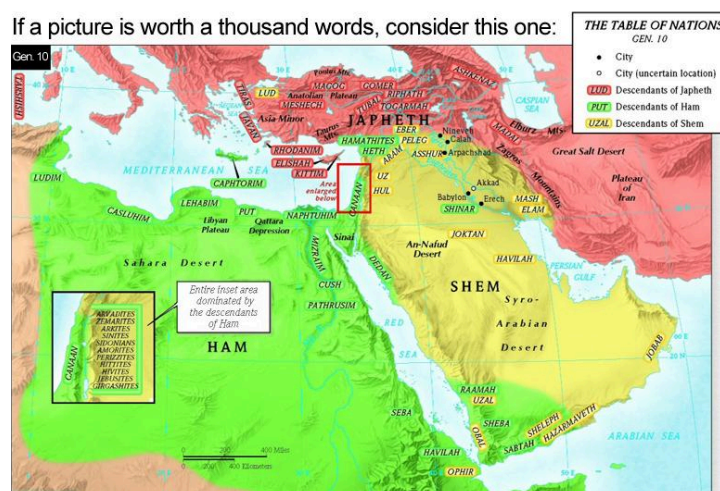
The journey through the Old Testament is replete with significant periods that shaped the Israelites' history and their relationship with God. From Jacob's deception to Joseph's rise in Egypt, from the enslavement and exodus to the conquest of the promised land, each event serves as a testament to God's faithfulness and His desire for His people to experience freedom and fulfillment.

The story of Israel's journey is not without its challenges. Despite God's promise to Abraham, the Israelites found themselves enslaved in Egypt for 400 years. This period of oppression led to their desire for freedom and ultimately culminated in their miraculous escape through the Red Sea. The Red Sea, symbolically viewed as a "water of baptism," represents the Israelites' liberation from slavery and their entry into a new covenant relationship with God.

Guided by the Law, which served as a moral and ethical compass, the Israelites journeyed through the wilderness for many years. This period of testing and refinement prepared them for their eventual arrival in the Promised Land. Under the leadership of Joshua, they conquered Canaan and established the nation of Israel, fulfilling God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants.

Geographical: The Table of Nations

If a picture is worth a thousand words, consider this one:



The lineage of Noah, commonly known as the Table of Nations, provides significant insights into the dispersion of humanity after the Great Flood. According to this genealogical record, Noah's three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japheth, became progenitors of distinct populations that settled in different regions of the world.

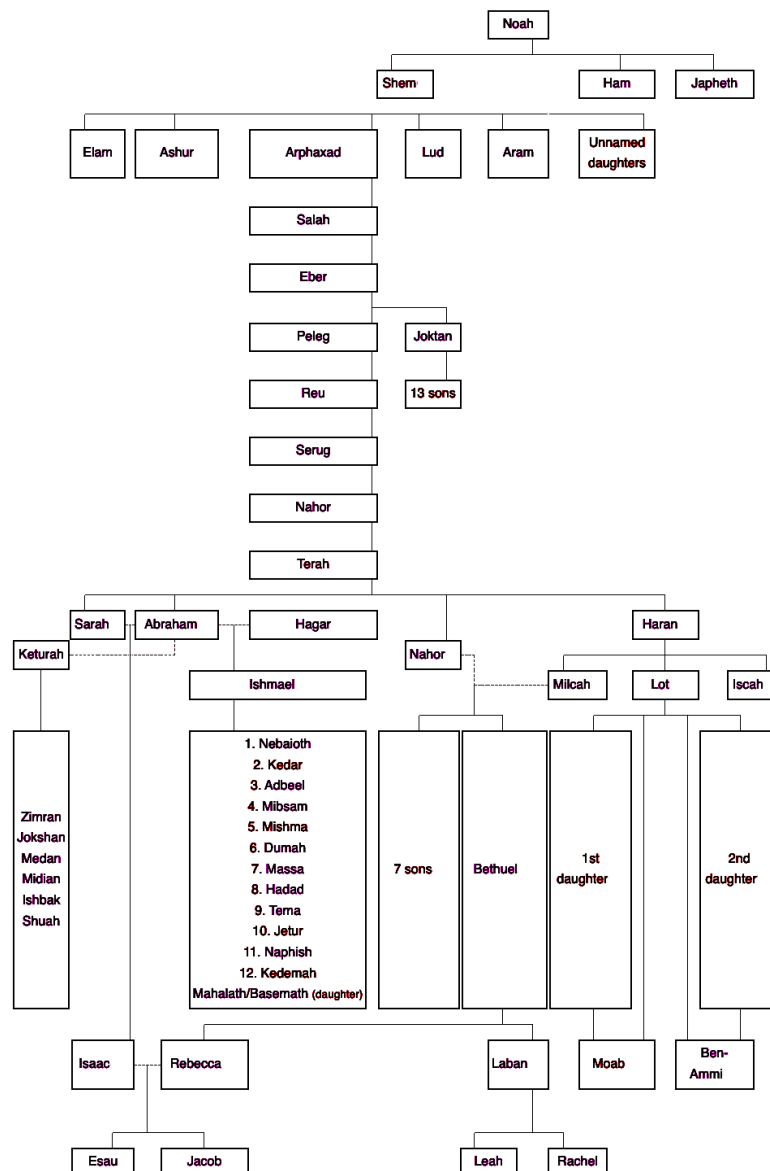
Ham, the youngest son, is associated with the land of Egypt. His descendants are believed to have migrated to North Africa and established the ancient Egyptian civilization. This region became renowned for its advanced culture, impressive architecture, and influential religious practices.

Japheth, the second son, is associated with Asia Minor and Europe. His descendants are believed to have spread across these regions, contributing to the diversity of cultures and languages found there. Japheth's lineage includes nations such as the Greeks, Romans, Celts, and Germanic tribes.

Shem, the eldest son, is linked to the Middle East. His descendants populated various areas in the region, including Mesopotamia, Canaan, and Arabia. Notably, Israel, the chosen people of God, descended from Shem through Abraham. God guided Abraham to the land of Canaan, fulfilling His promise of giving this land which He gives to him "and his descendants forever".

The Descendants of Shem

By looking at the genealogy of Shem, we can more notably notice the inter-relations between characters often referred to in Scripture. For instance, noticing Abraham and Lot's relationship, uncle to nephew, or seeing Laban, the uncle of Jacob, brother of Rebecca. Visualizing these relationships help simplify the biblical narrative of those events.



Judges to the united Kingdom

After Joshua's death, the tribes of Israel continued their conquest of the southern regions of Canaan. However, they were unable to thoroughly cleanse the land of its native inhabitants. God declared that these remaining people would be an obstacle to Israel's enjoyment of the promised land. Generations passed, and the younger Israelites turned away from God, intermarrying with the Canaanites and worshiping their local deities. God threatened to abandon Israel due to the disobedience of the youth, but he selected a series of judges, or rulers, to act as temporary leaders for the people.

The story of the Judges is a cycle of rebellion, salvation, and renewed rebellion. Israel would follow evil ways, a judge would save them, the judge would die, and then they would return to even worse evil. This cycle repeated itself over and over again.

Some notable parties involved in the story of the Judges include the Midianites (faced by Gideon) and the Philistines (faced by Samson). The judges who led Israel during this time period were Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson.

In the end, however, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Joshua 21:25). The Israelites sought their own way, followed their own desires, and were influenced by their pagan surroundings. This led to the point where God said of them, "They have rejected Me from being king over them" (1 Samuel 8:7).

The United Kingdom till Christ: High Level

A United Kingdom

Israelites wants a King

The Israelites, after being led out of Egypt by Moses and wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, eventually settled in the Promised Land. For many years, they were ruled by judges, who were chosen by God to lead and guide the people. However, as the Israelites grew in numbers and strength, they began to desire a king like the other nations around them.

Choice of the People: Saul

Around 1050 BC, the Israelites asked the prophet Samuel to anoint a king over them. Samuel, who had been the last judge of Israel, initially resisted their request, warning them of the dangers of having a king. However, he eventually relented and anointed Saul, a Benjamite, as the first king of Israel.

Saul was a tall and handsome man, and he was also a skilled warrior. A man after the heart of the people. He appeared good, was respected and even feared God at first. However, he was also prone to pride and jealousy. He made several mistakes during his reign, including disobeying God's commands and persecuting David, who was anointed by God to be the next king. As a result of his sins, Saul and his sons were killed in battle, and the kingdom passed to David.

Choice of God: David

David was a shepherd boy from Bethlehem who was chosen by God to be the next king of Israel. He was a man after God's heart, a man of great faith and courage, and he was also a skilled musician and poet. David's reign lasted for 40 years, and it was a time of great prosperity and power for Israel. He conquered many of Israel's enemies, and he also established Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. David is considered to be one of the greatest kings of Israel, and he is often referred to as "the man after God's own heart."

David's Successor: Solomon

Solomon was David's son and successor. He was known for his wisdom and intelligence, and he is often credited with writing the book of Proverbs. Solomon also built the First Temple in Jerusalem, which was a magnificent building dedicated to the worship of God. Solomon's reign was a time of great peace and prosperity for Israel, but it also marked the beginning of the decline of the kingdom.

Solomon's Successor: Rehoboam

Rehoboam was Solomon's son and successor. He was a harsh and oppressive ruler, and he refused to listen to the advice of his advisors. As a result, the kingdom of Israel was divided into two parts: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom was eventually conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC, and the southern kingdom was conquered by the Babylonians in 586 BC.

A Divided Kingdom

Rooted in the stubbornness of Rehoboam, Jeroboam ignited a revolution that irrevocably divided the once-unified Kingdom of Israel. The northern Kingdom, often referred to as Ephraim or Judah, had its capital in Samaria. The southern Kingdom, commonly known as Jerusalem or Israel, had its capital in Jerusalem.

Each Kingdom witnessed the rise of its own prophets. In the North, prophets emerged as powerful figures, speaking truth to power and challenging the actions of the ruling monarchs. However, the northern Kingdom stubbornly resisted the messages of these prophets, refusing to heed their warnings and guidance. This collective defiance led to their eventual downfall, as the northern Kingdom was swiftly conquered and its people taken into captivity.

In contrast, the southern Kingdom initially displayed a more receptive attitude towards its prophets. These prophets played a vital role in shaping the religious and moral landscape of the Kingdom, offering guidance and counsel to the rulers and people alike. However, over time, the southern Kingdom also began to stray from the righteous path, leading to its eventual downfall at the hands of the Babylonians.

The divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judah served as a cautionary tale, illustrating the consequences of disregarding the wisdom and guidance of prophets. Their stories underscore the importance of humility, obedience, and the need for leaders to listen to the voices of those who speak truth to power.

A Period of Captivity

The Israelites faced a tumultuous period marked by captivity and deportation to Babylon, which unfolded in three distinct waves. During this challenging time, notable prophets emerged as beacons of hope and guidance for their people. Among them stood Daniel, a young man of exceptional character and unwavering faith. His wisdom and ability to interpret dreams gained him favor with the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel's prophecies foretold the rise and fall of empires, providing the Israelites with a glimpse of hope amidst their exile.

Alongside Daniel, the prophet Ezekiel played a pivotal role in guiding the Israelites during their time in Babylon. Through visions and symbolic actions, Ezekiel conveyed God's messages of comfort, judgment, and restoration. He encouraged the Israelites to remain steadfast in their faith and to turn away from idolatry. Ezekiel's prophecies also addressed the future restoration of Israel and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

The Israelites' captivity in Babylon lasted for approximately 70 years. During this time, they endured hardships, oppression, and cultural assimilation. However, the presence of prophets like Daniel and Ezekiel sustained their hope and reminded them of God's covenant promises. Their prophecies provided a source of comfort and inspiration, helping the Israelites maintain their identity and faith in the midst of adversity.

The deportation of the Israelites to Babylon was a significant event in their history. It marked a period of trial and testing, but also a period of spiritual growth and renewal. Through the teachings of Daniel and Ezekiel, the Israelites learned valuable lessons about humility, repentance, and the importance of trusting in God's sovereignty. The Babylonian captivity ultimately served as a catalyst for the Israelites' spiritual transformation and prepared them for the eventual return to their homeland.



Review Questions

1. What event set the pace for the entirety of the bible? [The fall of Adam.]
2. Who are the Great Patriarchs in the Old Testament? [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob]
3. Who are Hagar and Ishmael? [Hagar was Sarah's maid who had a child Ismael from Abraham as per Sarah's lack of faith]
4. Where did the lineage of Noah go? [Ham went to Egypt, Shem went to the Middle East, Japheth went to Asia Minor/Europe]
5. From which one of Noah's sons was the church born? [Shem the eldest son.]
6. Which King was the people's choice and which king was God's choice? [Saul was the people's choice and David was God's choice.]
7. Which king was the reason the Kingdom was divided? [Rehoboam the son of Solomon alienated the Israelites, which caused the divide.]
8. Which tribe formed the southern kingdom? [Benjamin and Judah]

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9. Why did God allow the divide? [God had a plan of prosperity for Jeroboam, one which would make his name as known as King David. Yet, in his free will, Jeroboam did not fulfill God's plan.]
 10. What is the name of the northern kingdom under Jeroboam? [The north is now called Israel/Ephraim.]

OT II: United Kingdom

BIBLE BASICS

The United Kingdom: The Rejection of God

In the midst of a shifting political landscape, the Israelites, witnessing the stability and centralized governance of neighboring nations, yearned for a similar system. They approached Samuel, a prophet and judge, with a profound request: to appoint a king who would lead them and provide the stability and judicial oversight they perceived as lacking. This demand for a monarchy marked a pivotal juncture in Israel's history, signaling a transition from a theocratic system governed by judges to a centralized monarchy rooted in secular leadership.

As Samuel pondered this request, he found himself in a quandary. While he recognized the potential benefits of a monarchy in terms of stability and efficiency, he also foresaw the risks associated with concentrating power in the hands of a single ruler. Samuel's own sons, appointed as judges to succeed him, had fallen short in upholding the principles of justice and righteousness expected of their roles. Their corruption had further fueled the Israelites' discontent and uncertainty about their future governance.

Recognizing the gravity of the situation, Samuel sought guidance from the Lord. Through prayer and meditation, he received divine instruction to honor the Israelites' request for a king but to make clear the potential consequences of such a choice. Samuel warned the Israelites about the inherent dangers of monarchy, highlighting the potential for abuse of power, increased taxation, and military conscription. Despite these warnings, the Israelites remained steadfast in their desire for a king, believing that a centralized monarchy would bring strength and stability to their nation. God further revealed a profound truth to Samuel—the Israelites' rejection was not directed at him personally, but rather at God Himself.

God explained that the Israelites had turned away from His teachings and commandments, choosing to follow their own desires and idols. This rejection was not a reflection on Samuel's worthiness or faithfulness, but rather a manifestation of the people's spiritual rebellion.

God's message provided Samuel with a crucial perspective shift. It allowed him to understand that the rejection he faced was not a personal affront, but rather a symptom of a deeper spiritual issue within the Israelite community. This revelation helped Samuel to process his emotions and to continue serving God with unwavering dedication.

Furthermore, God's words held a broader significance beyond Samuel's personal experience. They served as a reminder that in times of rejection or opposition, it is essential to recognize that such challenges are often rooted in factors beyond one's control. While rejection can be painful and disheartening, it is crucial to maintain a sense of perspective and to avoid internalizing the negative emotions it may evoke.

By understanding that rejection is not always a personal indictment, servants can navigate difficult situations with greater resilience and grace. They can focus on their purpose and calling, knowing that their worth is not determined by external circumstances or the opinions of others.

Saul: The Downfall of a Noble Servant

God guided Samuel to Saul, a Benjaminite who was anointed first king of the Israelites. King Saul was renowned for his remarkable strength, heroism, and impressive stature. Standing head and shoulders above the rest of his people, Saul possessed a handsome appearance, earning him the comparison "the beauty of Israel." (2 Samuel 1:19).

Saul's rule as king began with limited authority, but in his second year, he embarked on a mission to break free from the oppressive Philistine yoke. He organized an army and led several successful military campaigns; "wherever he turned, he was victorious." (1 Samuel 14:47)

However, Saul's impatience and impetuosity led him to commit a grave error that would have far-reaching consequences for himself and the nation of Israel. Despite receiving explicit instructions from Samuel, the prophet of God, to wait for his arrival before offering a sacrifice at Gilgal, Saul's arrogance and desire for immediate action prompted him to disobey.

This act of disobedience drew the first curse upon Saul. Samuel, upon learning of Saul's actions, pronounced judgment on him, uttering words that would forever be etched in Saul's memory. Samuel declared that because Saul had not kept the commandment of the Lord, his kingdom would not be established and would eventually be torn from him. (1 Samuel 13:8-14)

The curse pronounced by Samuel was more than just a mere warning; it was a divine decree that set in motion a chain of events that would ultimately lead to Saul's downfall. From that moment forward, Saul's reign was marked by uncertainty, fear, and a growing sense of isolation as he struggled to maintain his position as king.

The consequences of Saul's disobedience reverberated throughout his life, affecting not only his personal well-being but also the stability and unity of the nation. His inability to trust in God's timing and his desire to take matters into his own hands set a dangerous precedent and weakened the foundation of his rule.

Despite the curse pronounced upon him, Saul had opportunities to repent and seek reconciliation with God. However, his pride and stubbornness prevented him from taking the necessary steps, and he continued to make decisions that further alienated him from God's favor.

In the war with the Amalekites, Saul once again disobeyed Samuel's prophetic command. Despite explicit instructions from God to annihilate the Amalekites and their king, Agag, Saul succumbed to a lapse in judgment. He spared the life of Agag, disregarding the divine directives. This act of disobedience had far-reaching consequences, leading to the second curse pronounced upon Saul. It also served as the first clear indication that the kingdom of Israel would be transferred to a rival, foreshadowing a significant shift in the nation's leadership. (1 Samuel 14:48 -15:1-9)

The repercussions of Saul's transgressions were profound. He fell into a state of depression and experienced a profound spiritual decline, losing the guidance and support of the Holy Spirit. In this time of crisis, when Saul's emotional well-being was faltering, a young man named David emerged as a beacon of hope. David, known for his musical talents, was recommended to serve Saul as a musician. His melodious harp-playing had a soothing effect on the troubled king, uplifting his spirits and alleviating his distress.

David's presence in Saul's court was not merely coincidental. It was part of God's plan to provide Saul with comfort and companionship during a challenging period. Through David's music, Saul found solace and momentary respite from the darkness that enveloped him. The relationship between Saul and David, though complex and often fraught with tension, would play a pivotal role in shaping the future of Israel.

The story of Saul's impatience and disobedience serves as a cautionary tale, reminding us of the importance of humility, obedience, and trust in God's timing. It illustrates the devastating effects that can result from acting rashly and disregarding divine instructions, leaving a lasting legacy of regret and missed opportunities.

David: The Greatness of a lowly man

David provided a glimmer of hope for the people of Israel. When the annual sacrificial feast was in full swing Samuel, the prophet of God, arrived. He had been sent by the Lord to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the next king of Israel. As each son passed before him (1 Samuel 16:6-10), Samuel looked for the one chosen by God. But none of them seemed to fit the bill. Then, Samuel inquired about Jesse's youngest son, David, who was out in the fields tending the sheep. Jesse sent for David, and when he arrived, Samuel was struck by his handsome appearance and intelligent eyes. He knew in his heart that this was the one.

Samuel anointed David with oil, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. From that day forward, David was a changed man. He became more courageous and confident, and his musical ability soared to new heights. The same music that helped King Saul in his depression mentioned earlier. After this, David returned to his humble life as a shepherd. But his life was far from ordinary. On one occasion, he faced off against a lion and a bear that were threatening his father's flocks. With nothing but his shepherd's sling and a few stones, David bravely fought and defeated both animals.

Years later, David's life took a dramatic turn when he appeared before his brothers in the camp of the Israelite army. He learned about the defiant challenge of the Philistine giant, Goliath. No one in the army dared to face Goliath, but David stepped forward. With unwavering faith in God, David went out to meet Goliath armed with only his sling and five smooth stones. In a stunning turn of events, David struck Goliath with a stone from his sling, knocking him to the ground. With Goliath's own sword, David delivered the final blow, securing a victory that changed the course of history. (1 Samuel 17:40-51)

Chosen as the future king, David's presence brought a sense of optimism and excitement. His reputation blossomed with each passing day, as his exceptional talents and charisma captivated the

hearts of many. However, Saul's envy and insatiable thirst for power cast a dark shadow over his appreciation for David's abilities. (1 Samuel 18, 19)

Saul's jealousy and fear of losing his throne consumed him. Driven by insecurity and paranoia, he orchestrated several attempts to eliminate his perceived rival. Despite having two golden opportunities to end Saul's life, David displayed remarkable mercy and spared him, showing restraint and respect for the divine anointing upon Saul. (1 Samuel 24, 26)

Saul's downfall was ultimately sealed by his own disobedience and inability to trust in God's plan. His actions were driven by pride, manipulation, and a desire for control. He sought counsel from mediums and sorcerers, defying the clear instructions of God. Consequently, the Lord turned away from him, and Saul's reign unraveled, leading to his tragic demise. (1 Samuel 28, 31)

David's journey contrasted sharply with Saul's. His path was marked by humility, trust in God, and a willingness to submit to His plan. Despite facing numerous challenges and setbacks, David's faith and obedience enabled him to overcome adversity and eventually ascend to the throne. His reign brought peace, prosperity, and justice to the nation of Israel, fulfilling the promise that God had made to his ancestor Abraham. (2 Samuel 5, 7)

After the death of King Saul, David was finally crowned king of Israel. He reigned for forty years, during which time he conquered Jerusalem and moved the Ark of Covenant there. He also defeated the Philistines and became a King that influenced small kingdoms such as Edom, Moab and Ammon.

David's reign was not without its challenges. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, who became pregnant, and then orchestrated the death of her husband, Uriah, to cover up his sin (2 Samuel 11:15). The prophet Nathan confronted David with his wrongdoing, and David repented and asked for forgiveness. Despite his mistakes, David was a man of great faith and devotion to God. He wrote many of the Psalms, which are still cherished and recited by believers worldwide.

At the end of his life, David established the kingdom for his son, Solomon, and passed away peacefully. He left behind a legacy of leadership, courage, and unwavering trust in the Lord.

Solomon: The use and misuse of a talent

King Solomon, the son of David and Bathsheba, ascended to the throne of Israel following the tumultuous period marked by Absalom's rebellion. Absalom, son and favorite of king David, was destined to be David's successor. Absalom rebelled against David. Eventually went into battle with David and Absalom died in battle at a young age. Solomon was the child of David's old age, the last born of all his sons.

Despite the tragic circumstances of his accession, Solomon's reign is often seen as one of the most glorious periods in Israel's history. He was known for his wisdom, his wealth, and his building projects, including the construction of the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem.

Solomon's wisdom was legendary. In a vision, God offered him the choice of any good thing he desired, and Solomon chose wisdom over riches, honor, or long life. This prayer was granted, and

Solomon became known for his deep understanding of the world around him. He was skilled in many areas, including science, literature, and philosophy (1 Kings 3:5-14).

Solomon's wealth was also immense. He imported large quantities of precious metals from far-off lands, and he received tribute from all the kings and princes of the subject provinces (1 Kings 10:25). He also established monopolies on trade, which contributed to his treasury (1 Kings 10:28,29). The total amount of gold that Solomon brought into the treasury in a single year was 666 talents (1 Kings 10:14), an incredible sum for the time.

One of Solomon's most notable achievements was the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple was built with lavish resources and meticulous attention to detail, symbolizing the zenith of Israel's religious and political stature. Solomon's dedication to the Temple was evident in the grandeur and expense involved, reflecting his commitment to establishing a lasting place of worship for God.

However, Solomon's reign was not without its challenges. He became involved with "strange women" and found himself drawn into the worship of foreign gods. This led to a decline in his spiritual life, and he eventually came to the conclusion that all the wealth and wisdom in the world were meaningless without God. He wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, which reflects on the vanity of human life apart from God. His story is a reminder that even the wisest and most powerful people can be tempted by sin and that true fulfillment can only be found in God.



Review Questions

1. Who were the Kings of Israel before the kingdom was divided? [Saul, David, Solomon]
2. What was the downfall of King Saul? [First he was so impatient waiting for Samuel that he offered an unlawful burnt sacrifice. Second he took spoils from the city of Amalek against God's command.]
3. Who was the king of the Amalek's that Saul spared his life and took him prisoner? [Agag, which was against God's command. Eventually Samuel killed him.]
4. What was David's sin which God punished him for? [He committed adultery with Bathsheba, she became pregnant then David killed her husband Uriah.]
5. What was God's punishment after David repented? [The son of sin from Bathsheba would die.]
6. Who was to be the successor of King David before Solomon? [Absalom. He rebelled and died in battle against David.]
7. What did King Solomon ask God to give him? [Wisdom in order to be able to judge God's people.]
8. What was Solomon's downfall? [He married strange women, who led him to worship idols.]

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9. What book did Solomon write which led to the belief that he repented? [Ecclesiastes]
 10. Why did King Saul hire David to do and why? [David was hired to cheer Saul after he fell into depression after he went against God at the battle with Amalek.]

OT III: The Divided Kingdom

BIBLE BASICS

The Prophecy of Ahijah

Prophecy of Ahijah, during the reign of Solomon

Ahijah, a prophet during Solomon's reign, foretold the division of the kingdom. God instructed Ahijah to meet Jeroboam and tear his new garment into twelve pieces, signifying the division of the kingdom. Ten pieces would be given to Jeroboam, representing the ten tribes he would rule over, while one piece would remain with Solomon, symbolizing the tribe of Judah and Benjamin that would stay loyal to him. Solomon, in response to Jeroboam's rebellion, attempted to kill him. However, Jeroboam fled to Egypt and sought refuge under the protection of Pharaoh Shishak. Upon Solomon's death, Jeroboam returned to Israel and ascended to the throne, fulfilling the prophecy of the divided kingdom. God had a plan of prosperity for Jeroboam, promising to make his name as renowned as King David's. "Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you." (1 Kings 11:38)

Have you heard of Jeroboam? Does his name resound like the name of David in the church? God may have plans for each and every one of us, great plans, but it is our choice to live it. Jeroboam, exercising his free will, chose not to adhere to God's plan, leading to his downfall. After forming the Northern Kingdom, Jeroboam established two new centers of worship to replace Jerusalem, one at Dan in the north and the other at Bethel in the southern part of his kingdom. By replacing Jerusalem as the God-appointed place to offer sacrifices, he became known as Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin.

"Now it happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the way; and he had clothed himself with a new garment, and the two were alone in the field. Then Ahijah took hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to you (but he shall have one tribe for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel), because they have forsaken Me, and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways to do what is right in My eyes and keep My statutes and My judgments, as did his father David. However I will not take the whole kingdom out of his

hand, because I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of My servant David, whom I chose because he kept My commandments and My statutes. But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and give it to you—ten tribes. And to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there. So I will take you, and you shall reign over all your heart desires, and you shall be king over Israel. Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you. And I will afflict the descendants of David because of this, but not forever.' ” Solomon therefore sought to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.” 1 Kings 11:29-40

The north is now called Israel, Ephraim. God had a plan of prosperity for Jeroboam, one which would make his name as known as King David. Yet, in his free will, Jeroboam did not fulfill God's plan.

Separation of northern 10 tribes

Ten tribes of Israel revolted under Jeroboam's leadership, forming the Northern Kingdom. These tribes were Asher, Dan, Ephraim, Gad, Issachar, Manasseh, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, and Zebulun. The northern kingdom, often referred to as Israel or Ephraim, separated from the southern kingdom of Judah, which remained loyal to Solomon's descendants. Jeroboam, upon hearing of Solomon's death, returned from Egypt and met with Rehoboam, Solomon's son and successor. The elders of Israel requested Rehoboam to lighten the burden imposed by his father, but Rehoboam's unwise response led to the division of the kingdom.

“And Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king. So it happened, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard it (he was still in Egypt, for he had fled from the presence of King Solomon and had been dwelling in Egypt), that they sent and called him. Then Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, “Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.” So he said to them, “Depart for three days, then come back to me.” And the people departed.” 1 Kings 12:1-5

The Divided Kingdom

The Divided Kingdom of Israel was a period in ancient Israelite history that began after the death of King Solomon around 931 BC. Jeroboam returned to Israel and was proclaimed king by ten of the twelve tribes. The two tribes that remained loyal to Solomon's son, Rehoboam, were Judah and Benjamin, who formed the southern Kingdom of Judah. The kingdom was split into two separate entities: the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah.

The northern Kingdom of Israel, which consisted of the tribes of Asher, Dan, Ephraim, Gad, Issachar, Manasseh, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, and Zebulun, was often referred to as "Israel," "Ephraim," or "Samaria," with its capital city being Samaria. The southern Kingdom of Judah, consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, was often referred to as "Judah" or "Jerusalem," with Jerusalem as its capital.

The division of the kingdom had significant political and religious implications. The northern kingdom was known for its idolatry and worship of false gods, while the southern kingdom remained more faithful to the worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem. This religious divide contributed to conflicts and tensions between the two kingdoms.

The divided kingdoms also experienced different political fortunes. The northern Kingdom of Israel was frequently at odds with its neighbors, including the Arameans and Assyrians, and ultimately fell to the Assyrian conquest in 722 BC. The southern Kingdom of Judah survived longer, but was eventually conquered by the Babylonians in 586 BC, leading to the Babylonian exile of the Jewish people.

The Divided Kingdom period was a transformative time in Israelite history, marked by political upheaval, religious division, and significant cultural and social changes. The legacy of the divided kingdoms can still be seen in the modern-day religious and ethnic divisions in the region.

The Kings of the North: Israel, Ephraim

Only Stage 1: No God, quick destruction

The Kings of the north in ancient Israel were known for their wicked deeds and idolatry. Jeroboam, the first of these kings, set up calf idols in his temples, leading the people astray from the worship of the one true God. His reign lasted for 22 years.

After **Jeroboam**, his son **Nadab** ascended to the throne. However, his reign was short-lived, lasting only two years (1 Kings 15:25-26). Nadab's captain, **Baasha**, plotted against him and killed him along with the entire House of Jeroboam. Baasha then became king and reigned for 24 years. During his reign, he engaged in a war with Asa, the king of Judah. (1 Kings 15:27- 16:7)

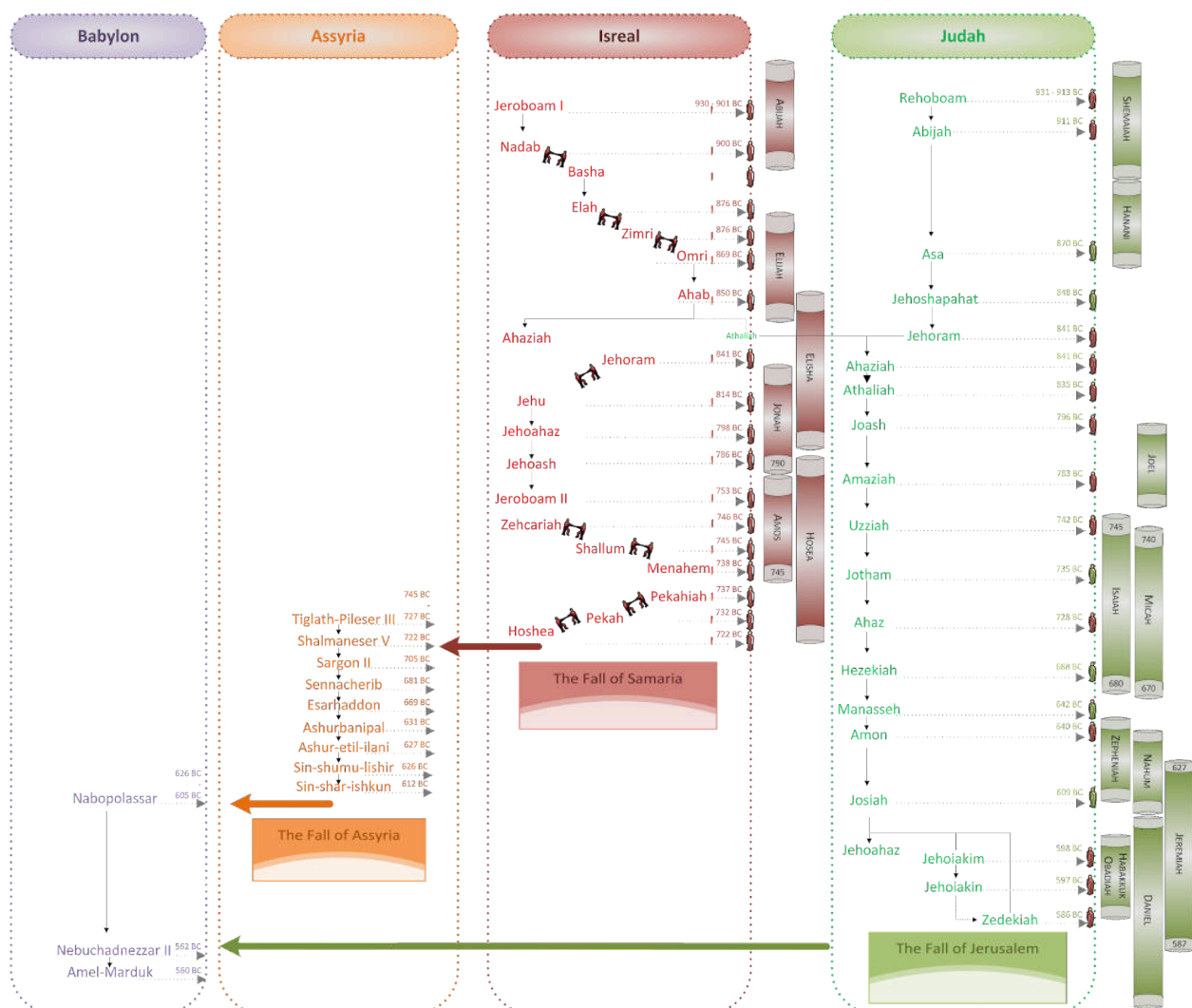
Baasha was succeeded by **Elah**, who reigned for only two years. He was assassinated by **Zimri**, the commander of his chariots (1 Kings 16:8-10). Zimri's reign was even shorter, lasting only seven days. The army elected Omri as king, and he laid siege to Tirzah, the capital city, forcing Zimri to commit suicide. (1 Kings 16:15-18)

Omri became king after Zimri's death and reigned for 12 years.(1 Kings 16:23-28) Omri's son, **Ahab**, surpassed his father in wickedness. He married Jezebel, a pagan priestess, and introduced Baal worship into Israel. Ahab also had his son, Ahaziah, marry one of the daughters of Judah, further solidifying his political alliances. Ahab's reign lasted for 21 years.(1 Kings 16:28 - 22:40) Murders, plots and deception were at the center of the Kingdoms of Judah.

Ahaziah succeeded his father, Ahab, but his reign was cut short after only one year. He was fatally injured in a battle and died. (1 Kings 22:40 , 2 Kings 1:18)

Jehoram, Ahab's son by Jezebel, became king after Ahaziah's death. He reigned for 12 years and continued the wicked ways of his father. Jehoram faced several challenges during his reign, including conflicts with neighboring kingdoms and a rebellion led by Elisha's student, Jehu. (2 Kings 3:1, 9:25)

Jehu, a military commander, was anointed king by Elisha's student. He rose up against Jehoram, killing him along with Ahaziah, the king of Judah, and Jezebel, Ahab's mother. Jehu's reign lasted for 28 years, and he implemented religious reforms to eradicate Baal worship from Israel. (2 Kings 9 - 10:36)



The Kings of the South: Judah, Jerusalem

Stage 1: Upholding a godly environment

Abijah took fourteen wives and had a large family with 22 sons and 16 daughters. However, Abijah's efforts to reunite the ten tribes of the northern Kingdom of Israel with Judah were unsuccessful. While he initially conquered Bethel and seized the golden calves worshiped there, instead of destroying

them as required by the law, Abijah kept them. This decision demonstrated that he was not fully devoted to upholding God's commands.

Asa, who succeeded Abijah, was a dedicated follower of Yahweh. He was committed to preserving the traditional worship practices and eradicating idolatry and its associated immoralities. After a successful battle against Zerah of Ethiopia in his tenth year of rule, Judah experienced peace for fifteen years until the 25th year of Asa's reign. However, in his 26th year, Asa faced a challenge from Baasha, the king of Israel. To counter this threat, Asa formed an alliance with Ben-Hadad I, the king of Aram Damascus, persuading him to break his peace treaty with Baasha and invade the Northern Kingdom in exchange for monetary compensation. Asa reigned for many years and was highly revered by his people. He was generally regarded as a righteous king, known for his devotion to God and his leadership.

Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, displayed great zeal in suppressing the idolatrous worship prevalent at the "high places" throughout the kingdom. This commendable action is recorded in 2 Chronicles 17:6, showcasing his commitment to promoting the worship of God. Additionally, Jehoshaphat sought to strengthen his kingdom by pursuing alliances with the northern kingdom of Israel. Notably, he arranged the marriage of his son, Jehoram, to Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. However, this alliance drew the criticism of the prophet Jehu, son of Hanani, who reproached Jehoshaphat for associating with the wicked house of Ahab. Recognizing his mistake, Jehoshaphat repented and returned to his previous stance of opposing all forms of idolatry. He dedicated himself to promoting the worship of God and ensuring just and righteous governance for his people, as described in 2 Chronicles 19:4–11.

Upon hearing the tragic news of Ahaziah's untimely death, **Athaliah**, driven by ambition and a desire for power, seized the throne of Judah. In a ruthless move, she ordered the execution of all potential claimants to the throne, including members of her own Omri dynasty. However, Jehosheba, Ahaziah's sister, defied Athaliah's murderous rampage and managed to rescue one of her grandsons, Jehoash, who was only a year old at the time. Jehoash was the son of Ahaziah and Athaliah's daughter, making him a direct descendant of both the Omri and Davidic dynasties.

Joash, the son-in-law of the prophet Zechariah, faced a challenging situation when the priests and officials of the kingdom turned away from worshipping God. Zechariah courageously confronted them, urging them to return to the path of righteousness. However, Joash, influenced by the wicked counsel of his advisors, reacted by ordering the execution of Zechariah by stoning. This tragic act demonstrated Joash's departure from the principles of faith and justice that had once guided his kingdom.

Stage 2: Guidance vs. Pride

Uzziah, a young monarch, ascended the throne at the tender age of 16 and reigned for approximately 52 years. During his rule, Uzziah oversaw a period of immense prosperity, surpassing all reigns since Solomon's except for Jehoshaphat's. The reigns of both, Uzziah and Jeroboam II in the north, marked prosperous times for both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The weakening of Egypt's economic power provided opportunities for growth and expansion. As a result, Israel and Judah experienced significant growth in stature and wealth. However, this era of prosperity led to overconfidence and a misplaced reliance on their own strength and resources.

Driven by pride, Uzziah committed a grave act. He ventured into the temple of Jehovah, intending to burn incense on the altar of incense, a privilege reserved solely for the priests. Azariah, the High Priest, recognized this as an attempt by Uzziah to usurp the prerogatives of the priests, and confronted him with a band of eighty priests. In a stern voice, Azariah declared, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense." (2 Chronicles 26:18).

At that very moment, the ground beneath them shook violently, and an earthquake erupted. Uzziah, stricken with terror, felt a burning sensation on his skin. It was leprosy, a dreaded disease that marked him as unclean. Compelled to reside in "a separate house" until his death, Uzziah's leprosy served as a constant reminder of his transgression (2 Kings 15:5, 27; 2 Chronicles 26:3). The Book of Isaiah uses "the year that king Uzziah died" as a reference point for describing the vision in which Isaiah sees his vision of the Lord of Hosts.

The government was entrusted to his son **Jotham**, who ably took the reins, guided by the advice of the prophets Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, and Micah. Jotham, a wise and righteous ruler, benefited greatly from the counsel of these prophets. Through their guidance, he implemented reforms, strengthened the nation, and promoted justice and righteousness. The reign of Jotham marked a significant period in Israel's history, characterized by spiritual revival, social justice, and economic prosperity. The prophets' influence on Jotham's rule left a lasting impact, shaping the destiny of his kingdom and leaving a legacy that would be remembered for generations to come.

Stage 3: Seeking the signs of God

Upon his accession to the throne of Judah, King **Ahaz** encountered a formidable challenge in the form of a coalition led by Pekah, the king of northern Israel, and Rezin, the king of Damascus (Syria). These monarchs sought to compel Ahaz to join them in opposing the growing threat of the Assyrians, who were preparing to invade the Northern Kingdom under their powerful leader, Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul). Faced with this pressing situation, the prophet Isaiah counselled Ahaz to place his trust in God rather than seek alliances with foreign powers. Isaiah urged Ahaz to ask for a sign as confirmation of God's promise of deliverance. However, Ahaz refused, stating that he would not put God to the test (Isaiah 7:12). In response, Isaiah declared that whether Ahaz asked for a sign or not, he would receive one. The sign would be the birth of a child, and the child's mother would name him Immanuel, which means "God-with-us" (Isaiah 7:13-14). This prophecy symbolized the enduring presence of God with His people, even in times of great distress.

Unfortunately, Ahaz did not heed Isaiah's counsel and instead chose to align himself with the Assyrians. In 732 BCE, he travelled to Damascus to pay homage to Tiglath-Pileser and his gods. Ahaz was captivated by the splendour and prestige of the Assyrian religion and politics, and he adopted some of their practices in Jerusalem. He had an altar built in the Temple, modelled after one he had seen in Damascus, and implemented changes to the ritual and furnishings of the Temple, all "because of the king of Assyria" (2 Kings 16:18).

In sharp contrast to Ahaz's actions, his son **Hezekiah**, who succeeded him to the throne, demonstrated unwavering trust in God. When the Assyrian king Sennacherib turned his attention towards the cities of the west in 701 BCE, Hezekiah refused to rely on Egypt for support. Instead, he placed his faith in

God and fervently prayed for deliverance. The Assyrians did not launch an attack on Jerusalem, and God miraculously intervened by sending an angel who struck down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night, forcing Sennacherib to return to his own land in disgrace.

Later in his life, Hezekiah fell ill with a severe boil or inflammation that Isaiah initially believed would be fatal. However, after Hezekiah prayed to God, Isaiah delivered a message that he would live for another 15 years (Isaiah 38:5). During this extended period, Hezekiah's son and successor, Manasseh, was born. Manasseh was 12 years old when he ascended to the throne after Hezekiah's passing.

Thus, the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah provide contrasting examples of kings who made different choices in the face of adversity. Ahaz turned to foreign alliances and adopted foreign religious practices, while Hezekiah relied solely on God and experienced miraculous deliverance. Their stories serve as reminders of the importance of faith, trust, and seeking God's guidance in times of trial.

Life of Repentance

During his reign, **Manasseh** reversed the centralizing religious reforms instituted by his father, King Hezekiah. Instead, he re-established local shrines, possibly driven by economic motives. These shrines served as places of worship for polytheistic deities such as Baal and Asherah. Manasseh even went so far as to restore the worship of these deities within the Temple itself, defying the strict monotheism promoted by his father. Furthermore, he sponsored the Assyrian astral cult throughout Judah, further solidifying his commitment to polytheism.

In a significant event, Manasseh was captured and brought in chains before the Assyrian king, believed to be Esarhaddon. This capture likely occurred due to suspicions of disloyalty on Manasseh's part. However, the biblical account indicates that he was later treated well and reinstated on his throne. Notably, neither the biblical book of Kings nor Assyrian records provide any further details about this incident.

Manasseh's wickedness reached such extreme levels that he is even said to have committed the heinous act of martyring the prophet Isaiah by cutting him in half. The severity of his imprisonment, however, brought about a transformation in Manasseh. He experienced deep remorse and repentance, turning away from his evil ways.

After Manasseh's reign, his son **Amon** succeeded to the throne. Unfortunately, Amon reverted to the idolatrous practices of his father, undoing much of the spiritual progress made during Hezekiah's time. Much can be said about unhealthy upbringing, even though the repentance of Manasseh was accepted by God, the consequences of his decisions impacted Israel past his departure.

From the tender age of eight, Josiah was placed as King of Judah. Guided by an unwavering faith, he sought the Lord's presence and guidance, yearning to establish a righteous and God-centered nation. With unwavering determination, Josiah embarked on a mission to restore the worship of God throughout his kingdom. He recognized that the people had strayed from the path of righteousness, and he believed it was his duty to lead them back to the Lord. He commanded the people to cleanse the Temple and remove all the idols and pagan symbols that had crept in over the years.

Josiah also encouraged the life of repentance among his subjects. He understood that true worship involved not only external rituals but also a genuine transformation of the heart. He preached the

importance of turning away from sin and living a life that was pleasing to God. Through his words and actions, Josiah inspired many to seek forgiveness and to walk in the ways of the Lord.

His reforms had a profound impact on the nation. The people began to turn away from idolatry and embrace the worship of the one true God. The Temple once again became a place of reverence and devotion, and the nation experienced a spiritual revival. Josiah's reign became a model of faithful leadership and a testament to the power of God's grace at work in a ruler's heart.

The Prophetic Messages

North Jonah, Amos, Hosea & Northern Israel

Jonah the prophet, precedes Amos and Hosea, and lived in the northern Israel but prophesied to the Ninevites who are in Assyria. Some say that as a prophet, he knew what would happen to his land, his family 65 years later (his mission was ~65 years prior to the Assyrian crisis). So as such, this is why he didn't want to go to Nineveh. He went the complete opposite way, he wanted nothing to do with them. Jonah learned later to rely on God. He prayed and repented and God answered his prayers.

Jonah's Message: their city would be destroyed in forty days if they did not repent for their wickedness.

Amos was a man of fearless resolution in it, faithful and bold in reproofing sin and denouncing the judgments of God for it, and pressing tirelessly to repentance and reformation. He then calls Israel to account, and judges them for their idolatry, their unworthy walking under the favors God had bestowed upon them, and their incorrigibility under his judgments. He calls them to repentance, rejecting their hypocritical sacrifices unless they did repent. He foretells the desolations that were coming upon them notwithstanding their security, some particular judgments, particularly on Amaziah; and, after other reproofs and threatenings, concludes with a promise of the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom and the happiness of God's spiritual Israel therein, just as the prophecy of Joel concluded.

Amos' Message: Rebuked Social Injustice within the North, called them to repentance, warning them of God's coming punishment, and making them seek the day of the Lord. He was not successful, then Hosea came after him.

Hosea prophesied of the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes when it was at a great distance, and lived himself to see and lament it, and to improve it when it was over, for warning to its sister kingdom. The scope of his prophecy is to discover sin, and to denounce the judgments of God against a people that would not be reformed. Thus, God wants to speak harshly to Israel and sent Hosea. God asks him to marry Gomer, the harlot. Due to his marriage he ends up having the ability to relate to them – telling them that he understands why they don't love God, because you don't know Him – if Gomer knew how much I committed to her, how much I love her and was loyal to her, she would not leave me. The beginning of transformation is not to love God, it is to know Him! This is the beginning of transformation.

Hosea's Message: Lack of knowledge of love of God. During the reign of king Hoshea, Israel fell captive to the Assyrians, 722 BC.

Other notable prophets at the time are Elijah and Elisha.

South Isaiah, Micah Judah

At the time of **Isaiah**, Pekah, king of Israel, tells Syria (small country) let's unite and fight Assyria – knowing they are too small, they go to Ahaz, king of Judah, but he rejects them, at the recommendation of Isaiah! When they refused, Israel and Syria wanted to take over his army, so they went to war. Ahaz was trembling in fear. He started doubting and began thinking of requesting help from Egypt. But Isaiah stopped him – don't shake! Trust and he will deliver you - and promised God would deliver them as a sign. Surely, Assyrians ended up helping them and eventually conquered Israel all together.

Isaiah's Message: Israelites spread throughout the nations. The priests became bad, so they spread. So how does God save the Israelites? He sends His Son, to teach the apostles to spread the world. The Israelites are now everywhere. How does God save Israel? It's crazy, we got to save everyone! This is the message. The world is now Israel. "In returning and rest you shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength" Isaiah 30:15

Micah was to convince sinners of their sins, by setting them in order before them, charging both Israel and Judah with idolatry, materialism, oppression, contempt of the word of God, and their rulers especially, both in church and state, with the abuse of their power; and also by showing them the judgments of God ready to break in upon them for their sins. And to comfort God's people with promises of mercy and deliverance, especially with an assurance of the coming of the Messiah and of the grace of the gospel through him. It is remarkable concerning this prophecy, and confirms its authority, that we find two quotations out of it made publicly upon very solemn occasions, and both referring to very great events. One is a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem (3:12). Another is a prediction of the birth of Christ (5:2)

Micah's Message: God judgment of evil, and goodness to the faithful, as well as addressing social injustice that was also going on in the south. "What does Yahweh require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)



Review Questions

1. Who was the reason for the kingdom's division? [Rehoboam when he refused to ease the judgment on the Israelites. They rebelled. The kingdom was divided into northern (10 tribes) and southern (2 tribes) and made Jeroboam king of the northern kingdom.]
2. Under which King Israel fell captive by the Assyrians? [King Hoshea in 722 BC.]
3. Which prophet warned King Ahaz of Judah regarding joining forces with the north to

fight the Assyrians? [Isaiah the prophet warned King Ahaz. He was trembling but Isaiah gave him confidence.]

4. What was Micah's message? [God judgment of evil, and goodness to the faithful, as well as addressing social injustice that was also going on in the south.]
5. How many tribes were part of the North and how many were part of the South? [10 were part of the North (Asher, Dan, Ephraim, Gad, Issachar, Manasseh, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, and Zebulun) and 2 were part of the South (Judah and Benjamin)]
6. The Prophet Jonah was part of which kingdom and to whom he prophesied? [The northern kingdom and he prophesied to the Ninevites.]
7. What were the capital cities for the north and the south kingdoms? [Samaria was for the north and Judah for the south.]
8. What was Amos's message and what was the outcome? [He called them to repentance, rejecting their hypocritical sacrifices unless they did repent. His message was social justice and returning from their evil way. He was not successful.]
9. Why did the prophet Hosea marry? What occupation did she have? [God told Hosea to marry Gomer. She was a harlot.]
10. When did the South and the North fall under Assyrian rule? [During the reign of king Uzziah and Jeroboam II. They did look to God or rely on God, so He brought the Assyrians in ~mid 700's BC who slowly grew and dominated.]

OT IV: From the Exile to Christ

BIBLE BASICS

Exile and Return: God's Discipline, God's Fidelity

When Judah fell to Babylon (Jerusalem and the Temple destroyed, 586 BC), the catastrophe was not merely political. It was covenantal. God had warned through the prophets that persistent idolatry and injustice would lead to chastening (cf. Jeremiah 25; 2 Kings 24–25). Yet even judgment was not abandonment. In exile, Israel learned, painfully but clearly, that the Lord is not a local God tied to one land, but the God of heaven and earth.

What exile produced in the people of God

1. **Repentance and purification from idols**

After the exile, Scripture reveals a marked change: Israel's chronic attraction to carved idols is decisively broken. The exile became a furnace that burned away false worship.

2. **A deeper attachment to the Word of God**

With no Temple and no sacrifices, people clung to Scripture, prayer, fasting, and repentance. This prepared the way for synagogue life and regular public reading of the Law and Prophets (cf. Nehemiah 8).

3. **Hope shaped by prophecy**

The prophets did not only explain why the exile happened, they proclaimed God's promise of restoration: return, rebuilding, and ultimately the coming of the Messiah (Isaiah 40–55; Jeremiah 31; Ezekiel 36–37; Daniel 7–9).

The return from exile

Under the Persians, the Lord opened a way home:

- **Zerubbabel and Jeshua:** return and rebuilding of the Temple foundations (Ezra 1–6)
- **Ezra:** renewal of the Law and teaching the people (Ezra 7–10)
- **Nehemiah:** rebuilding Jerusalem's walls and restoring civic life (Nehemiah)

Exile was not only a punishment; it became a **school of humility**. God permits the stripping away of comfort so that the heart returns to Him. For a servant in tribulations, he learns to ask: *"What is God restoring in me through this hardship?"*

"The Silent Years" That Were Not Silent: Preparation for Christ

After the post-exilic prophets, the biblical narrative grows quieter, yet God’s providence continues powerfully. This era is often called “intertestamental,” but spiritually it is a bridge: God is preparing language, geography, politics, and hearts for the coming of the Savior.

Key developments that prepare the world for the Gospel

- **The Diaspora (scattering among the nations):** Jews live throughout the Mediterranean world. This spreads knowledge of the God of Israel and creates communities that will later hear the apostolic preaching (Acts repeatedly begins in synagogues).
- **The Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT):** Greek becomes the common language, enabling Scripture to be read widely, and later enabling the apostles to proclaim Christ across the empire in a shared tongue.
- **Synagogue life:** prayer, reading, instruction, fasting, and communal discipline intensify. When the Messiah comes, He enters this world where Scripture is publicly read and awaited.

God often works quietly. The impression that “Nothing is happening” may simply mean **God is laying foundations**.

Alexander’s Empire and the Spread of Hellenism

After the Persian period, **Alexander the Great** conquered much of the known world. After his death, his empire fractured among competing successors. Over time, Judea found itself pulled between major Hellenistic powers, especially those ruling from **Egypt (Ptolemies)** and **Syria (Seleucids)**.

Hellenism: cultural pressure on faith

“Hellenism” refers to the spread of Greek language, education, philosophy, entertainment, and public identity. In itself, culture is not automatically evil; the danger came when rulers demanded that the Jews **abandon covenantal life**, like the Sabbath, circumcision, sacrifice, purity, and worship of the One God and adopt pagan customs.

This produced three broad responses inside the Jewish community:

1. **Assimilationists** – welcomed Greek identity and gradually treated covenant life as optional
2. **Faithful traditionalists** – kept the Law and worship, even under threat
3. **Active resistance** – defended the faith through organized struggle when worship was attacked

Every age has its “Hellenism”: a dominant culture that pressures believers to dilute holiness. The question is not whether we live among unbelievers, but whether we **belong** to the spirit of the age.

The Maccabean Witness: Zeal for Worship, Zeal for Holiness

When persecution intensified under Seleucid (Syrian) power, especially through policies that profaned worship and pressured Jews to violate the Law, resistance erupted. The priest Mattathias and his sons began a revolt that later became associated with Judas “Maccabeus” (“the Hammer”).

The Revolution

In 168 B.C. the Jewish priest Mattathias started a revolt against Greek oppression. Upon Mattathias death in 166 B.C., his son, Judas the Maccabee succeeded him as leader of the revolt. Seven holy Maccabee were martyred, Abim, Antonius, Gurias, Eleazar, Eusebonus, Alimus and Marcellus, their mother, Solomonias, and their teacher, Eleazar, suffered for their faith in 166 under Syrian King Antiochus IV.

A ninety-year-old elder, the scribe and teacher Eleazar, was brought to trial for his faithfulness to the Mosaic Law. He suffered tortures and died at Jerusalem. The disciples of St. Eleazar, the seven Maccabee brothers and their mother, Solomonias, also displayed great courage. They were eventually brought to trial in Antioch by King Antiochus. They fearlessly acknowledged themselves as followers of the True God, and refused to eat pork, which was forbidden by the Law.

The eldest brother acted as spokesmen for the rest, saying that they preferred to die rather than break the Law. He was subjected to fierce tortures in sight of his brothers and their mother. His tongue was cut out, he was scalped, and his hands and feet were cut off. A cauldron and a large frying pan were then heated, and the first brother was thrown into the frying pan where he offered his soul up to God. The next five brothers were tortured one after the other. The seventh and youngest brother was the last one left alive. King Antiochus suggested to their mother, St. Solomonias, that she persuade the boy to obey him, so that her last son at least would be spared. Instead, the brave mother told him to imitate the courage of his brothers. After all her seven children had died, St. Solomonias stood over their bodies, raised up her hands in prayer to God and died.

The martyric death of the Maccabee brothers inspired Judas Maccabeus, and he led a revolt against King Antiochus. With God’s help, he was victorious, and then purified the Temple at Jerusalem. He also destroyed the altars which the pagans had set up in the streets. All these events are related in the Second Book of Maccabees (Ch. 8-10).

Why Maccabees matters in an Orthodox formation

The Books of Maccabees do not simply record national history. They are a **school of courage and martyrdom**.

- The faithful chose obedience to God over life itself.
- Martyrdom is shown as **witness**: fidelity to the covenant, trust in resurrection, and refusal to bargain away holiness.
- The purification and rededication of the Temple becomes a sign that God preserves worship even in dark times.

This period forms the spiritual imagination of the later New Testament world: people are longing for deliverance, purity, a faithful priesthood, a true king, and the consolation of Israel.

A servant does not seek suffering, but learns that faithfulness may cost comfort, reputation, or opportunity. The Maccabean witness teaches: *“Holiness is not negotiable.”*

Rome and Herod: The World into Which Christ Was Born

Rome eventually asserted control over Judea, and Jerusalem came under Roman power in the first century BC. Rome often governed through local rulers and appointed officials, extracting taxes and keeping order through military force.

Herod the Great and the Second Temple

Herod, famous for both political skill and ruthless insecurity, expanded and beautified the Temple complex, turning it into a wonder of the region. The Temple remained the heart of sacrificial worship and pilgrimage.

This is the Temple world of the Gospels:

- Christ is presented in the Temple as an infant (Luke 2).
- Christ teaches and is found among the teachers (Luke 2).
- Christ cleanses the Temple from exploitation (Matthew 21; John 2).
- The Temple becomes a central stage in the final week before the Cross.

Yet the Lord also prophesied judgment upon corruption and hypocrisy. Not long after the apostolic era began, the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans (70 AD), ending the sacrificial system and intensifying the spread of the Gospel throughout the nations.

External religion (buildings, status, visibility) can coexist with an unrepentant heart. The Lord demands **inner truth**, not only outward form.

Jewish Religious Groups: The Spiritual Climate of the Gospels

By the time of Christ, several movements shaped Jewish religious life. Understanding them helps us read the New Testament clearly:

- **Pharisees** – devoted to strict observance of the Law and traditions; emphasized purity and believed in the resurrection
- **Sadducees** – priestly/aristocratic group centered on Temple leadership; generally rejected resurrection and emphasized a narrower authority base
- **Essenes** – separatist communities pursuing strict purity; critical of the Temple leadership; associated with writings like the Dead Sea Scrolls
- **Zealots** – revolutionary movement resisting Roman rule, seeking political liberation

The Lord's ministry confronts not only personal sin but also distorted spiritual paths: hypocrisy, legalism without mercy, religion used for power, and nationalism mistaken for salvation.

It is easy to "choose a camp" (strictness, activism, intellectualism, withdrawal) and call it holiness. True holiness is Christ Himself: **truth with mercy, zeal with humility, purity with love.**

The Fulfillment: Exile Ends in Christ

From exile to return, from foreign empires to Roman rule, from cultural pressure to martyrdom, the storyline moves toward one goal: **the coming of the Messiah.**

Exile scattered Israel among the nations; Christ gathers all nations into His Kingdom.

The Temple prefigured true worship; Christ makes worship "in spirit and truth."

The longing for deliverance becomes fulfilled, not by a sword, but by the Cross and Resurrection.

The Old Testament does not merely end; it opens into the Gospel.



Review Questions

1. What was one major spiritual fruit Israel gained through the Babylonian exile?
Purification from idolatry and a renewed return to God through repentance and devotion to His Word.
2. Name the three main leaders associated with restoration after exile (Temple, Law, walls).
Zerubbabel (Temple restoration), Ezra (restoration of the Law), Nehemiah (rebuilding the walls and civic renewal).
3. What is "Hellenism," and why did it become a spiritual threat to covenant life?
Hellenism is the spread/adoption of Greek culture, language, and identity; it became a threat when it pressured Jews to abandon worship, the Law, and holiness for pagan practices.
4. What three broad responses did Jews show toward forced Hellenization?
Assimilationists (embraced it), Traditionalists (refused and remained faithful), Resistance (actively opposed the oppression).
5. Who began the revolt associated with the Maccabees, and what did this struggle defend?
Mattathias began the revolt; it defended faithfulness to the Law and the freedom to worship the One True God.
6. Why is martyrdom in the Maccabean period important in Orthodox spiritual formation?
It models steadfast witness: choosing obedience, holiness, and faith in God (and the resurrection) over compromising under pressure.

7. What role did the Second Temple play in the life and ministry of Christ?
It was the center of Jewish worship and the setting where Christ was presented, taught, cleansed the Temple, and where major events of the Gospel narrative unfolded.
8. List the four main Jewish groups often referenced in the New Testament world.
Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots.
9. How did the Diaspora and synagogue life help prepare the way for the spread of the Gospel?
Jews were scattered among many nations with synagogues and Scripture-reading communities, creating ready places for apostolic preaching and wide communication through shared language.
10. In one sentence: how does the storyline “Exile to Christ” point to Jesus?
God uses exile, restoration, and world events to prepare for the Messiah: Christ, who fulfills true deliverance, gathers the nations, and restores worship through His Cross and Resurrection.